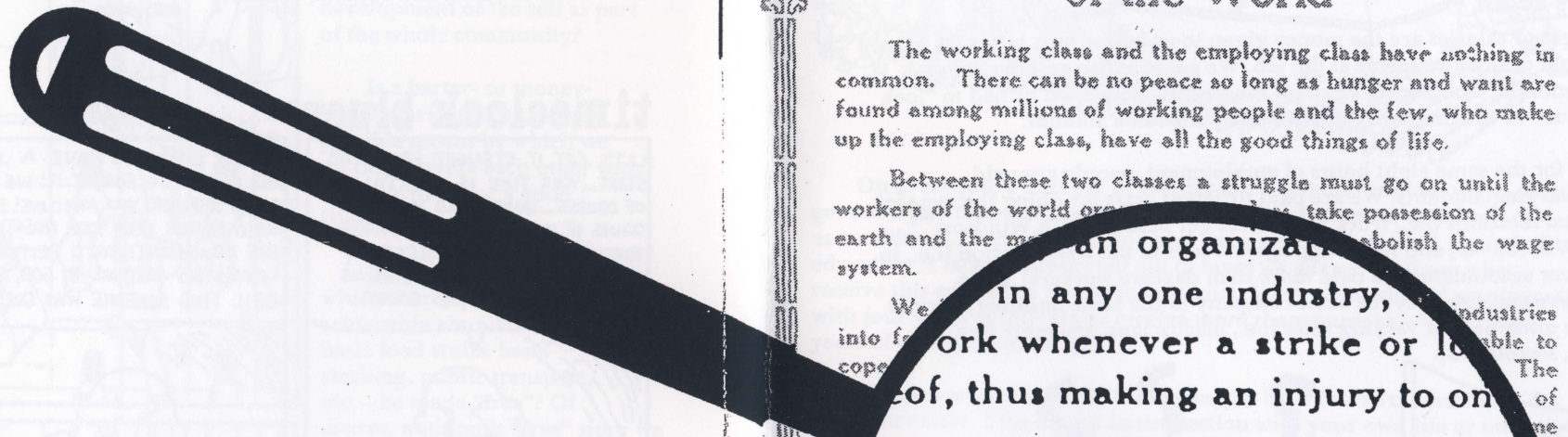

VANCOUVER

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Preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system.

We find that the centering of the management of each industry into fewer and fewer hands makes it useless for the workers to organize in any one industry, or craft exclusively, because the employing class has the power to use other industries to defeat the workers in any one industry. For example, the workers in one industry are involved in a strike or lockout, they are unable to cope with the employing class. The only way to success is for the workers to organize in such a manner that they have one big union for all workers in any one industry, or industries, so that all may strike at the same time that a strike is on in any department of any one industry, or may take action in any other way that circumstances may demand.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work," we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system."

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the every-day struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

What Does The I.W.W. Mean By "Abolition of the Wage System"?

The Industrial Workers of the World believe in a better life for all. In considering what's right and what's wrong with our present society, the I.W.W. naturally includes how we are paid for the work we do: wages and salaries.

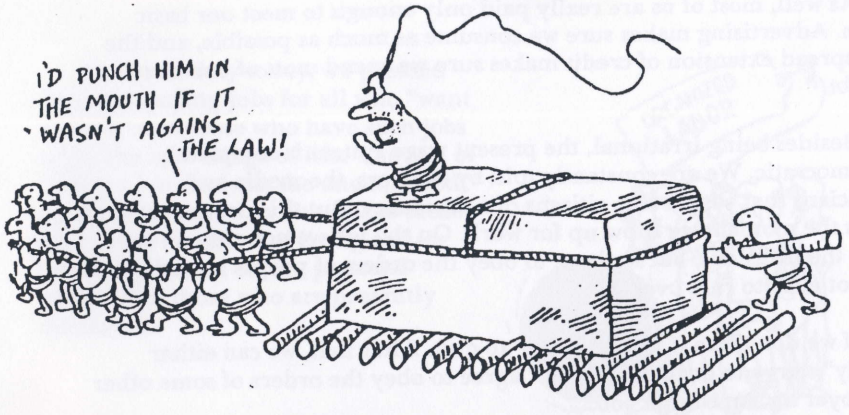
What are wages?

Wages or salaries are the money given to us by the boss in return for a set amount of time we spend at the job. We get so much an hour, or so much a month. Whether we've spent the day working hard or had to "look busy" much of the time, we receive exactly the same amount.

But for the same eight hours of employment, people are paid greatly varying amounts. We are paid different rates for doing the *same* job in *different* locations (i.e., truck assemblers get paid more in Windsor than in Vancouver) and for doing *different* jobs in the *same* location (i.e., in Vancouver accountants are paid more than daycare workers). Even when we're employed by the same company in the same building, various tasks are often paid at varying rates (i.e., electricians, assembly line workers, secretaries).

These differences in pay are mostly a result of events which happened in our past: our history. Certain jobs get a particular rate of pay because of some decisions by the *boss*. Other jobs get a particular rate of pay because of actions taken by our *forefathers* and *foremothers*. As teachers grew more militant, for example, that task changed from a low-paying to a better-paying one. Overall, unionized jobs show the results of past fights for better pay and conditions.

On the other hand, a failure to stay militant results in lower comparative wages. There was a time in B.C.'s history when woods workers overall were among the highest-paid blue-collar employees. No longer.



On every job, a number of excuses are offered to explain why I should get more pay than you, and why he or she receives more than both of us combined. Years of education and training are often cited, though this education is largely supported out of taxes we *all* pay. So those who receive this education really benefit *twice*. Meanwhile, should employees with four years of university receive more than employees with seven years of an apprenticeship?

Another argument is that some people have more responsibility or take more risks. This can be in connection with your own life or others' lives, or concerned with valuable items or money. But then, why aren't those who work at the most hazardous jobs (as determined by Workers' Compensation Board statistics) the most highly paid? Or, why don't bank tellers earn a lot of money?

Should the people who produce what society needs most be the best paid? This would mean that farmers and agricultural laborers who produce our *food* would be among the highest paid people. They aren't now! And those who manufacture our *clothing* are still often immigrant women working for very, very low pay in sweat-shop conditions. And the host of non-union carpenters and others building our *housing* aren't very well reimbursed for their work, either.

What's wrong with wages?

As can be seen, then, the present wage system is totally irrational. It is a hodge-podge of differing amounts paid to people for a range of often-contradictory "reasons". In fact the work of all of us (however humble) is equally necessary to keep this society going.

About the only sure conclusion that can be gathered from the present wage system is that the further up the corporate ladder from actually producing goods or services a person is, the more money he or she takes home.

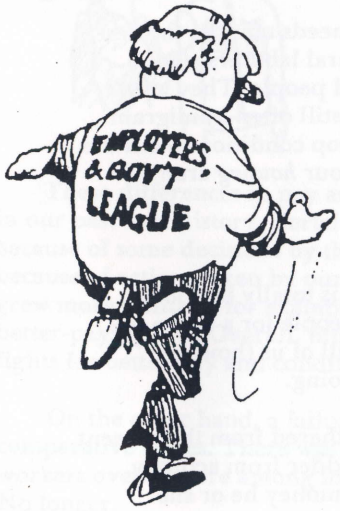
As well, most of us are really paid only enough to meet our basic needs. Advertising makes sure we consume as much as possible, and the widespread extension of credit makes sure we spend most of our lives in debt.

Besides being irrational, the present wage system is completely undemocratic. We are constantly told by teachers, the media and politicians that we are free citizens of a *democracy*. But this democracy ends for us the moment we show up for work. On the job we not only do not make the decisions, but we have to obey the orders of people we definitely did not elect to rule over us.

If we don't like it, we are "free" to quit. After that, we can either "freely" starve to death or "freely" agree to obey the orders of some other employer on some other job.

When we are employed, we get as wages only a part of the value of what we produce. We are therefore robbed at the point of production; this is the true meaning of exploitation. Besides our wages, the product of our labor goes to pay for raw materials, for research and development, for things our community needs (paid for in the form of taxes) and for profits taken by the already rich owners and managers.

It's true that in any social system workers would not be able to receive as wages the complete value of the product of our labor, for all systems require plant maintenance, research and development, etc. But the decision as to *how* to divide up among these categories the wealth produced as a result of our work is not made by us.



Until we who produce this wealth can decide ourselves how it will be used, there is no such thing as a "fair" wage or salary for any of us.

Finally, the wage system as a whole defines our society. Who can really determine what we are "worth"? To classify people according to "worth" is undemocratic, anti-human, a vestige of a barbarous past. All human beings have worth by nature of their humanness. It is only a step from classifying people according to "worth" to deciding to exterminate the "unworthy". The roots of the Russian Gulag and the German gas chamber lie within the wage system.

In our society today, we pretend there are paying jobs for all who "want to work" and those who have such jobs enjoy the best things of life. The rest of society—housewives, the unemployed, senior citizens and so on—has to settle for a lower standard of living and/or being dependent on the personal goodwill of those who are presently employed.

No one has ever proven that our society can provide a constantly-growing number of jobs to match population growth and displacement by technology. Indeed, the evidence is that society can't. But under the wage system, society is still organized to offer rewards and punishments, praise and blame, as though these wage-paying jobs are available for all.

What would replace the wage system?

The present irrational, undemocratic wage system has to go. What the I.W.W. offers in its stead is not a blueprint, but an opportunity. We believe a reorganization of society is needed so that decision-making on the job as well as off is made democratically.

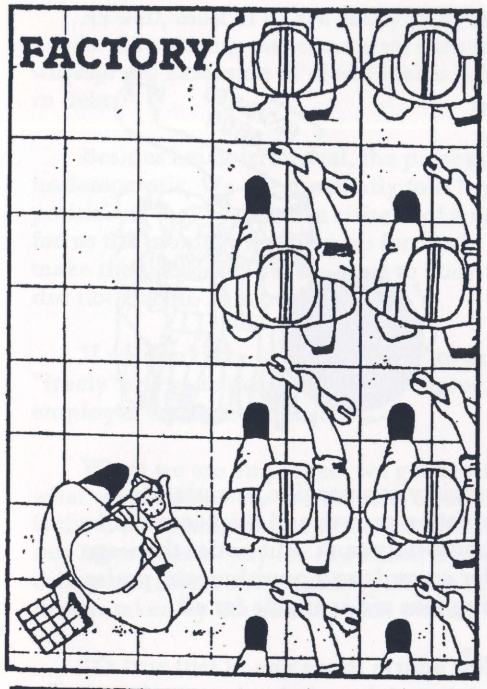
Since human beings are remarkably ingenious, we believe different groups of people will come up with different democratic alternatives to the present way of running society.

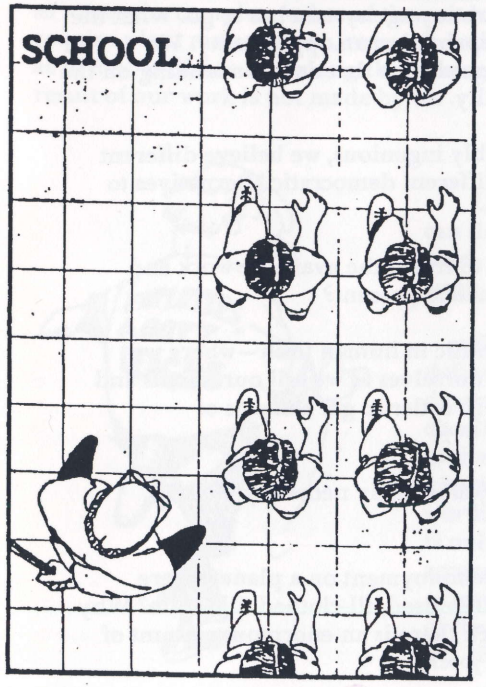
Wouldn't this be a happier place to live if the available work and resources were more equally *shared* than at present?

Shouldn't we put an end to the traffic in human flesh—where we have to compete with others just like ourselves as we sell our talents and time and selves to the highest bidder in order to get a means of livelihood?

How much of what we do at our job is really necessary, helpful, ecologically beneficial, moral?

How can there be world-wide unemployment on a planet where much of the population is starving, ill-housed, ill-clothed, illiterate? Why is the world so organized that although there is an enormous amount of *work* to be done there is a shortage of *jobs?*





Do schools really have to stress competition (if two people help each other, that's "cheating") and ranking (you "pass," I "fail")? What would society be like if education instead stressed co-operation and full development of the self as part of the whole community?

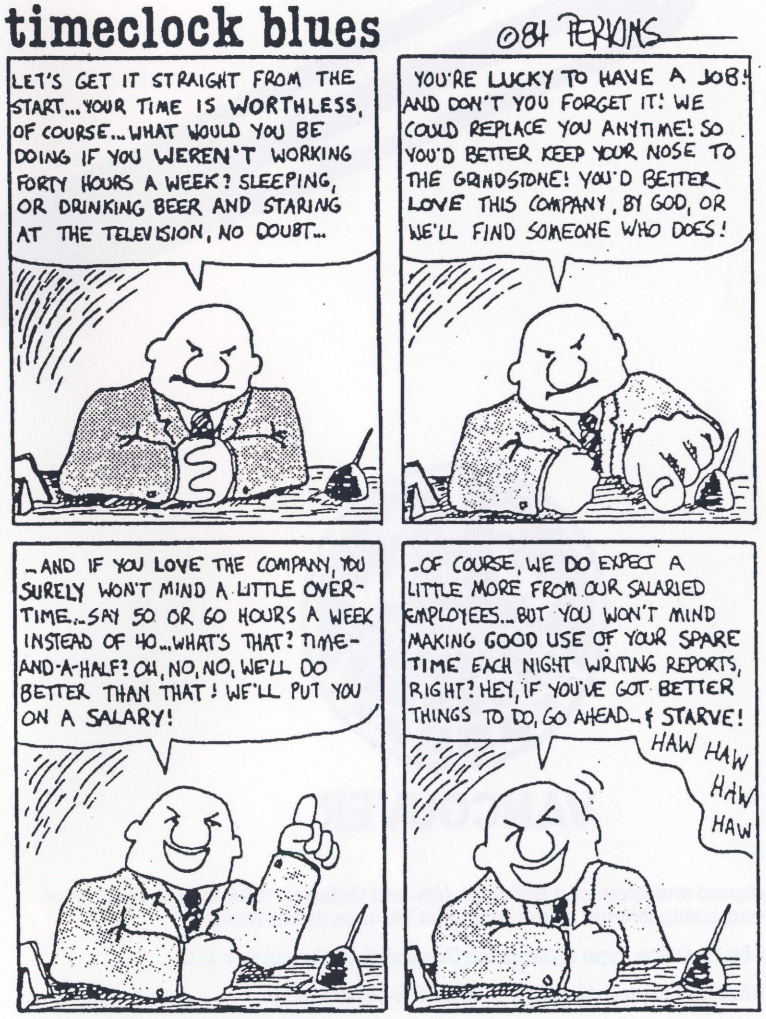
Is a barter- or money-based marketplace the only possible means by which we all can provide each other with what we need for a good life?

Why shouldn't things of which there is an actual or achievable abundance—such as basic food stuffs, basic clothing, public transport, etc.—be made "free"? Of course, nothing is "free" since we have to work to produce things. However, many goods and services such as primary and secondary education, libraries, roads, water and sewage systems, utilities, etc. in many countries are out of the price system and free to the user. How many other common items could be free?

Abolition of the wage system, as the I.W.W. sees it, would profoundly change how we work and how our work affects our lives, our community, our planet. We want a society where everyone's basic mental and physical needs are automatically met—a healthy, ecologically-sound society which battles against the formation of social hierarchies.

At present the wage system creates and perpetuates a wide range of injustices, drastically narrowing the potential of what it means to be a human being. Wages are necessary only in a society of compulsion. Abolition of the wage system is a step working people every place have to take if we are ever to build a better world, rather than just exchange one set of bureaucrats and bosses for another.

Let's think about it, talk about it, *act* on it.


timeclock blues
©84 PERKINS
LET'S GET IT STRAIGHT FROM THE START... YOUR TIME IS WORTHLESS, OF COURSE... WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING IF YOU WEREN'T WORKING FORTY HOURS A WEEK? SLEEPING, OR DRINKING BEER AND STARING AT THE TELEVISION, NO DOUBT...
YOU'RE LUCKY TO HAVE A JOB! AND DON'T YOU FORGET IT! WE COULD REPLACE YOU ANYTIME! SO YOU'D BETTER KEEP YOUR NOSE TO THE GRINDSTONE! YOU'D BETTER LOVE THIS COMPANY, BY GOD, OR WE'LL FIND SOMEONE WHO DOES!
-AND IF YOU LOVE THE COMPANY, YOU SURELY WON'T MIND A LITTLE OVER-TIME... SAY 50 OR 60 HOURS A WEEK INSTEAD OF 40... WHAT'S THAT? TIME-AND-A-HALF? OH, NO, NO, WE'LL DO BETTER THAN THAT! WE'LL PUT YOU ON A SALARY!
-OF COURSE, WE DO EXPECT A LITTLE MORE FROM OUR SALARIED EMPLOYEES... BUT YOU WON'T MIND MAKING GOOD USE OF YOUR SPARE TIME EACH NIGHT WRITING REPORTS, RIGHT? HEY, IF YOU'VE GOT BETTER THINGS TO DO, GO AHEAD... & STARVE!
HAW HAW HAW HAW

From Processed World